

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 3152

STATE FOR S/NM

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BM
SUBJECT: NCAP: HELICOPTER INSTRUCTOR PILOT TRAINING

REF: (A) STATE 161518; (B) RANGOON 2018

1. IN THE PAST WEEKS, SENIOR BURMA AIR FORCE (BAF) OFFICERS HAVE SOUGHT INFORMATION FROM MISSION MEMBERS REGARDING THE STATUS OF USG CONSIDERATION OF BAG REQUEST FOR HELICOPTER INSTRUCTOR PILOT TRAINING AT US ARMY AVIATION TRAINING FACILITIES. DURING A MEETING ON AUGUST 17, SENIOR BAF OFFICERS STATED THAT THE AIR FORCE WAS PREPARED TO COMMIT ITS HELICOPTERS TO ACTUAL AIR-MOBILE TYPE OPERATIONS ONCE THE TACTICAL TRAINING WAS COMPLETED. (IT MUST BE NOTED THAT THE BAF OFFICERS ARE SPEAKING ONLY FOR THE BAF.) OUR IMPRESSION FROM THE FOREGOING EXCHANGES IS THAT THE BAF IS EAGER FOR THIS TYPE OF TRAINING.

2. AS STRESSED IN REF B, WE BELIEVE THAT ADDITIONAL TRAINING IN AIR-MOBILE OPERATIONS AND OTHER TACTICS IS ESSENTIAL TO PROMOTE MORE EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF THE HELICOPTERS IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION IN BURMA. IN REF A, THE DEPARTMENT DEFERRED MAKING A DECISION ON BAF REQUEST, CITING A LACK OF UNANIMITY WITHIN THE GUB ON TACTICAL USE OF HELICOPTERS.
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ALTHOUGH WE ARE AWARE THAT THERE ARE SOME WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND BURMA ARMY THAT DO NOT FAVOR A MORE AGGRESSIVE USE OF THE HELICOPTERS BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE LOSSES AND A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF AIR-MOBILE TACTICS, THE DAO REPORTS A TREND AMONG SENIOR ARMY OFFICIALS IN FAVOR OF LESS RESTRICTED USE OF HELICOPTERS. WHEN ASKED RECENTLY IF WE COULD EXPECT A MORE AGGRESSIVE USE OF HELICOPTERS IN TACTICALLY

MOVING GROUND FORCES CLOSER TO COMBAT OBJECTIVES, THE DEFENSE MINISTER, GEN. KYAW HTIN, RESPONDED WITH A POSITIVE "YES".

3. IN THE MISSION'S VIEW, PILOT TRAINING IN AIR-MOBILE OPERATIONS IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP--MORE, A PREREQUISITE--TOWARDS ACQUAINTING THE BURMESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WITH AIR-MOBILE TACTICS. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, IT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO--AND SHOULD IN OUR OPINION PRECEDE--THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFIED BURMESE VIEWPOINT ON HELICOPTER EMPLOYMENT--WHICH MAY NEVER BE CLEARLY ENUNCIATED. INCLUDED IN OUR CONCEPT IS THE IDEA THAT THE TRAINING, ALONG WITH COURSE OUTLINES, TRAINING AIDS, ETC., WOULD BE GIVEN TO A CADRE OF PILOT-INSTRUCTORS WHO IN TURN TRAIN REMAINING PILOTS AND ASSIST IN THE ORIENTATION AND TRAINING OF GROUND FORCES RELATIVE TO HELIBORNE ASSAULTS.
(PROPOSED IMET CAREER TRAINING, IF APPROVED, WOULD INCLUDE SOME INSTRUCTION IN HELIBORNE OPERATIONS FOR INFANTRY COMMANDERS, WHICH WOULD ALSO ENHANCE ARMY APPRECIATION OF THIS SUBJECT.)

4. IN LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, THE MISSION REQUESTS THAT THE DEPARTMENT MAKE A DECISION ON BAF REQUEST NOW. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND OFFERING THE BURMESE AN INSTRUCTOR PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM AT THIS TIME. IF U.S. MILITARY TRAINING IS RULED OUT, WE PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES:

A. CONTRACT TWO CIVILIAN INSTRUCTOR PILOTS (EX-ARMY WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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EXTENSIVE VIETNAM AND MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE), DEVELOP A SPECIAL COURSE OF INSTRUCTION AND CONDUCT THE TRAINING IN BURMA. MISSION BELIEVES GUB MIGHT BE RECEPTIVE TO THIS APPROACH, PROVIDED NO PUBLICITY IS GIVEN.

B. CIVILIAN TRAINING IN U.S. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS TO CONTRACT TWO CIVILIAN INSTRUCTORS PILOTS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE, BAIL REQUIRED HELICOPTERS FROM THE U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (ARNG), AND CONDUCT THE TRAINING AT ARNG FACILITIES IN HAWAII. THIS LOCATION MOST RESEMBLES THE TERRAIN AND CLIMATE OF BURMA.

C. STILL ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS HAVING A THIRD COUNTRY, SUCH AS AUSTRALIA OR BRITAIN OR JAPAN, PROVIDE THE TRAINING WITH THE USG PAYING THE COSTS. WE DOUBT THE BURMESE WOULD HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH THIS, THOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THEM.

5. OPTION A WOULD PROVE LESS COSTLY BY A CONSIDERABLE MARGIN, ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE BURMESE WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TRAINING IN U.S.

6. REQUEST DECISION, AND THAT WE BE INFORMED OF IT, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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